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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses a case study that explored how six preservice teachers perceived their experiences in using an oral and written retelling strategy in teaching reading to students with learning disabilities. A qualitative research design was used in the form of a descriptive case study approach. The 6 subjects were undergraduate female students (ages 21-28), who were completing their student teaching semester in four elementary schools, one middle school, and one senior high school. Five of the subjects were placed in a varying exceptionality setting and one in an inclusion setting. Data included written surveys, weekly audiotaped and transcribed focus group sessions, written samples of retells, analysis of scores, checklists, surveys, and rubrics, as well as observation/debriefing. Findings from the study indicate the six preservice teachers engaged in retelling activities during their student teaching semester, finding it a positive and productive strategy to increase reading skills, writing proficiency, vocabulary experiences, and oral language; encourage risk-taking and positive social interactions; and increase self-esteem. The sharing of student teaching experiences and perceptions in weekly sessions, coupled with an observation and debriefing, also enabled the preservice teachers to experience a positive growth of confidence and competency. (Contains 46 references.) (CR)

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A Qualitative Study of the Perceptions of Six Preservice Teachers: Implementing Oral and Written Retelling Strategies in Teaching Reading to Students with Learning Disabilities

Qualified teachers who love to teach, but even more importantly, are highly competent, must be placed in classrooms across the nation. Yes, all children can learn. As Norton (1997) so candidly reported at the Mid-South Educational Research Association Conference in Memphis, "As teacher educators, it is our responsibility and privilege to help them 'do it' better" (p.24). Improving teacher preparation and training has been addressed in detail over the past years. "The new teacher education programs envision the professional teacher as one who learns from teaching rather than as one who has finished learning how to teach" (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 7). But, teaching is not an easy field. Wong and Wong (1998) report that up to fifty percent of new teachers will leave the teaching profession within their first seven years, compared to statistics of ninety-five percent of beginning teachers who were provided support during their initial years actually remain in teaching after three years, and eighty percent of supported teachers remain after five years.

Consider the following thought provoking quotes from the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement: "Children who are identified as having reading disabilities profit from the same type of well-balanced instructional programs that benefit all children who are learning to read and write, of which the bottom line is engaging in meaningful reading and writing" And, "Successful classrooms – where

teachers read books aloud and hold follow-up discussions, where children read independently every day, where children write stories and keep journals, where the teacher frequently monitors their efforts – provide these opportunities which equal successful classroom learning environments" (CIERA, 1998, p. 2)

It is obvious that meaningful reading, writing, and oral language are key components in a successful learning environment. This is similar to the components in retelling – speaking, listening, reading, writing, thinking, interacting, comparing, matching, selecting and organizing information, remembering, comprehending, illustrating, higher-order thinking, sharing, predicting, sequencing, recalling, and connecting to prior knowledge – all natural forms of language. Cunningham and Allington (1999) maintain that "struggling readers who participate in remedial or resource room instructional support programs are the very children who need the kind of reading instruction that is coherently planned and richly integrated... what is common among the very best remedial and special education programs is that children spend most of their time actually reading and writing in a way that supports classroom success" (p. 203). McNinch, Schaffer, and Campbell (1999) established that "poor readers spend less time reading than good readers and that much of poor readers' instructional time is spent practicing skills, not in actual reading" (p. 90). Dr. Allington wrote an article in 1977, "If They Don't Read Much, How They Ever Gonna Get Good?" on the same subject, therefore this is not a current problem only. In 1980, Dr. Allington conducted a study to examine the difference in instruction between good readers and poor readers. He found that poor readers read only half the words that good readers read and they had less opportunity to read silently and/or aloud in the

classroom. We must give poor readers a chance to be successful in reading. Torgesen (1998) is in agreement, indicating that children who get off to a poor start in reading rarely catch up, and the consequences range from negative attitudes toward reading, to reduced opportunities for reading and vocabulary growth, to missed opportunities for development of reading comprehension strategies – the amount of reading practice by poor readers is lost on a regular basis. One of the reasons that catch-up is not a possibility is that special education classes tend to go slower, offering a watered-down curriculum to the students.

Activities that require active involvement assist struggling readers in constructing meaning, with strategies such as choral reading, repeated readings, reading aloud, and summary writing (retelling) being quite successful (Cunningham and Allington, 1999; Dennis and Walter, 1995; Vacca, Vacca, Gove, 1995). Retelling is a strategy which involves all readers in the reading process, thus giving the opportunity to hear the story, read the story, and respond orally, in writing, or by illustrations.

At the National Summit on Research in Learning Disabilities (May, 1999), training preservice teachers was a hot topic. Professionalism, rigor, pride, and accountability were repeated key words. Teaching preservice teachers (as well as seasoned teachers) to challenge the child with learning disabilities was another point repeatedly brought up at the Summit. (Lyon, 1999; Lyon, Vaughn, Deshler, Alexander, Hehir, Gersten, Graham, Torgesen, and Silver, 1999). Thus, the focus of this case study in using oral and written retelling strategies to teach reading to students with learning disabilities is based upon this premise. According to panel discussions at the Summit, many preservice teachers do not receive adequate courses in teaching reading. Therefore, a segment of new teachers begin

their teaching career feeling incompetent and uncomfortable in the teaching of reading. According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities, Key Elements for Systems Change, Report of the 1996 Teacher Preparation Summit Follow-Up Task Force finding, a startling statistic is shared:

> While our nation's laws stipulate that children are required to attend school, they fall short in not assuring that students are taught by well-prepared, effective teachers. Under-prepared teachers constitute more than 25% of those hired each year, and they are assigned disproportionately to schools and classrooms that serve the most educationally vulnerable children (p. 4).

A large gap continues to exist between research and practice.

In fact, I presented at a reading workshop last year, where participants were teachers of students with educable mental handicaps. One teacher came up to me at the end of the day with tears in her eyes. She had been a business major during her undergraduate studies, and had received a Master's Degree in Exceptional Student Education. She had not taken one reading class and was not sure how to teach reading at all. She was so appreciative to be a part of that reading workshop, and asked if she could sit in my university reading classes without really being a part of the undergraduate class, just for the mere knowledge of learning how to teach reading effectively.

Duffy-Hester (1999) acknowledged, "A recent national survey of elementary school teachers revealed that many were unsure of how to meet the needs of readers who struggle" (p. 481). The Children's Defense Fund, Yearbook 1999, found that many teachers are not adequately prepared for the task of teaching reading.

What characteristics does an effective preservice teacher exhibit? What are the "best practices" used in teaching reading to students with learning disabilities? Specifically, how is retelling used in the teaching of reading to students with learning disabilities? What are their experiences in implementing the retelling strategy?

The Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study was to explore how six preservice teachers perceive their experiences in using the oral and written retelling strategy in teaching reading to students with learning disabilities. Many teachers do not feel confident in effectively teaching reading to struggling readers. Could the quality and content of preservice training experiences increase the amount of effective reading teachers of students with learning disabilities? How can preservice teacher training influence the characteristics, attitudes, and teaching methods, assisting in the development of an effective reading teacher?

A look at how preservice teacher training can influence the attitudes and teaching methods was explored in assisting in the development of an effective reading teacher. Many studies were reviewed, giving insight into the value of exemplary teachers (Allington, 2000; McDermott, Rothenberg, and Gormley, 1998; Morrow, Tracey, Woo, and Pressley 1999; Norton, 1997; Ruddell, 1999; and Thomas and Montomery 1998).

Theoretical constructs include influential teachers, learning disabilities, focus groups, case studies, preservice teachers, and the teaching of reading using oral and written retelling. A thorough review of the literature is an important component of the study.

Research Design:

A qualitative research design was used, in the form of a descriptive case study approach. According to Leedy (1997), the purpose of a case study is to give information about a topic of interest, producing detailed description. A convenience sampling was used. The opportunity was offered to all of the ten Varying Exceptionalities, preservice student teachers, enrolled in EDU 499, "Directed Student Teaching" at Barry University's 2 + 2 Program at the beginning of the Spring 2000 semester. Seven of the ten preservice teachers first agreed to participate in the study. One dropped out after the second focus group, because she felt that the retelling strategy would not fit in with her student teaching assignment of an algebra class. The remaining six subjects continued for the duration of the study. (See Table 1 for information.) "When a large amount of time is spent with your research participants, they less readily feign behavior or feel the need to do so; moreover, they are more likely to be frank and comprehensive about what they tell you" (Glesne, 1999, p. 151). This group of subjects exhibited an ongoing level of trust, sharing candid remarks about their experiences. The six subjects were undergraduate female students, ranging in age from 21 to 28, who were completing their student teaching semester in four elementary schools, one middle school, and one senior high school. Five of the subjects were placed in a Varying Exceptionality setting and one in an inclusion setting, in a diverse socio-economic, largely Hispanic venue, in the fourth largest school system of the United States. (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Division of Exceptional Student Education). All six subjects had been previous students of this educator.

Table 1: Subject Information

Subject	Age	Sex	GPA	What Will You Do to Become an Influential Teacher?
One: LC	22	Female	3.5	"I will always show my students that they can do whatever they wish, as long as they try. I will have faith in them."
Two: OC	28	Female	4.0	"Pay attention to the students' needs and learn ways to be a better teacher."
Three: LC	21	Female	3.98	"I will follow all the positive experiences I've had with my field teachers and professors. I will accept children as children and not label them by their disability, but by their ability."
Four: JG	28	Female	3.78	"Try to keep my students motivated, find their individual interests and strengths to help them learn.
Five: YM	21	Female	3.95	"I want to educate those special children in the best way I can. I want to be their mentor! I will go out of my way to be there for them."
Six: DR	24	Female	4.0	"In order to become an influential ESE teacher, I would have to have an open mind and heart, and treat each child as an individual."

Details of the Subjects' School Characteristics are included in Table 2. Student teaching experiences ranged from elementary (Kindergarten – 5th grades) to middle school (6th – 8th grades), to high school (9th – 12th grades) and mainly in resource LD/VE settings, with one inclusion model.

Table 2: Subjects' School Characteristics

	Level Total Population	Ethnicity	ESE ESOL	Free/Reduced Lunch
A.	Elementary, K-5 1287 students	White Non-Hispanic 6% Black Non-Hispanic 1% Hispanic 91% Asian, Indian, Multiracial 2%	SLD 4.4 % EMH 0% EH 0.1% ESOL 41.3%	72.2%
	Subject worked with 4th grade students during the study, in an inclusion setting.			
B.	Middle, 6-8 1478 students	White Non-Hispanic 9% Black Non-Hispanic 1% Hispanic 89% Asian, Indian, Multiracial 1%	SLD 8.6 % EMH 0.4% EH 1.1% ESOL 10.6%	54.7%
	Subject worked with 6th – 8th grade students during the study, in a resource setting.			
C.	Elementary, K-5 787 students	White Non-Hispanic 3% Black Non-Hispanic 1% Hispanic 96% Asian, Indian, Multiracial 0%	SLD 4.6 % EMH 0% EH 0% ESOL 49.3%	85.0%
	Subject worked with 3rd – 5th grade students during the study, in a resource setting.			
D.	Elementary, K-5 1378 students	White Non-Hispanic 7% Black Non-Hispanic 1% Hispanic 91% Asian, Indian, Multiracial 1%	SLD 4.9 % EMH 0.1% EH 0.1% ESOL 32.9%	71.4%
	Subject worked with 2nd grade students during the study, in a resource setting.			

	Level Total Population	Ethnicity	ESE ESOL	Free/Reduced Lunch
E.	Senior High, 9-12 3217 students	White Non-Hispanic 10% Black Non-Hispanic 11% Hispanic 77% Asian, Indian, Multiracial 1%	SLD 5.3 % EMH 0.5% EH 0.3% ESOL 10.9%	39.1%
	Subject worked with 9th – 10th grade students during the study, in a resource setting.			
F.	Elementary, K-5 974 students	White Non-Hispanic 34% Black Non-Hispanic 7% Hispanic 53% Asian, Indian, Multiracial 5%	SLD 4.4 % EMH 0% EH 0.1% ESOL 41.3%	72.2%
	Subject worked with 3rd grade students during the study, in a resource setting.			

Table 2 shows the ethnic and program breakdown of each school where the subjects were completing their student teaching, including free lunch percentage, which is often connected to the economical levels of the school. Source: Miami-Dade County Public Schools, District and School Profiles, 1997-98, Elementary and Secondary Education, Management and Accountability.

Methodology:

Data included written surveys, weekly audiotaped and transcribed focus group sessions, (Schumm, 1999) written samples of retells, analysis of scores, checklists, surveys, and rubrics, as well as observation/debriefing. According to Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996), "Focus group interviews often provide the views of key stakeholders, and these can stimulate the thinking of researchers" (p.155). Originally, focus group

sessions were scheduled for one hour, once a week. Typically, the sessions went over the hour, sometimes two or three hours long, with discussion abounding. It is interesting to note that the majority of the focus group sessions took place after a weekly behavior management course, usually the same day, in which all ten of the student teachers were enrolled; therefore the focus group sessions were not viewed as a "reunion" or get-together, since they were already together as a group on a weekly basis, with other students in their cohort. The sessions stood on their own, as a worthy, appealing, and motivating group, with obvious means of assisting the subjects in some way. The subjects looked forward to the weekly focus groups and later reflected on the experience. Focus groups embrace the concept of coaching, which includes building trust, contributing to learning, and building toward interdependence, self-reflecting, sharing, experimentation, feedback, and observation (Costa and Garmston, 1994). The twelve focus group sessions were informative and a valuable source of reflection. The first three sessions provided background information of the concept of retelling to the subjects; they actually had to learn about it first. (Brown and Cambourne, 1990; DeTemple, and Tabors, 1996; Gambrell, Koskinen, and Kapinus, 1991; Hoyt, 1999; Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Division of Language Arts/Reading; Morrow, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1997, 1999; and Woods and Moe, 1999). "Oh, I love it! Maybe I can get my kids to read!" shared one subject, whose teacher does not appear to read to the students. The next eight focus groups targeted the retelling experiences as a whole, as well as a specific topic. The last session was one of celebration. See Table 3 for the focus group topics and schedules.

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Reflections of the Focus Group Sessions were written by the subjects, after they completed their student teaching experience. They had already graduated and had all been hired, five in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools System, three teaching students with learning disabilities (LD) two in middle school and one in an inner city high school; one teaching students enrolled in Pre-K ESE classes; one teaching students with severe emotional disturbances (SED); and one having traveled back to her home island of Trinidad, had been hired in an elementary school. They gave insight to the focus group sessions, in relation to the total process:

Focus Group Reflections:

LC The reason why I looked forward to the weekly meetings was because I felt that it was a moment where I would be able to share what I thought worked the best and didn't work.

YM One thing that kept me going during my internship was that I knew I would be going to our weekly group sessions. We shared our experiences, our activities, and our feelings. We discussed our successful and not so successful retelling activities. Somehow, we made each other feel more confident and more prepared.

OC What I looked forward to the most about our weekly sessions was the fact that I could vent out any accomplishments as well as any disappointments I might have had that week or with a particular retelling lesson. It was a time to let go and release any questions or concerns we might have and it was an escape from our daily routine and all of us enjoyed it. I know I certainly did. I learned a great deal from my experiences as well as from the group's experiences. I really believe that it helped my student teaching be a success. And, it helped me in my first year of teaching as well. I'm doing retelling now with my students, as a matter of fact.

DR I looked forward to our weekly meetings. At times I would be upset if a meeting were to be postponed (which rarely happened), but I needed the support and the opportunity to vent and express my successes and failures during this crucial time of my student teaching, not to mention the pizza, and other meals. ☺. I cannot imagine not having them at my side. The case study groups opened my eyes to reading in the classroom. I now have a greater appreciation for the excitement of

watching my students' progress throughout. The new ideas that I left with once a week, from either the research that Professor Gudwin brought in to us or an idea that someone saw in their classrooms, in a book, or even on the internet, allowed me to actually go out 'there' and put them to use. This allowed me to expend the excitement I had pent up inside and to simply let it loose in the classroom. I thank you sincerely for this wonderful experience. I hope that we will keep in touch.

JG As I reflect on our weekly group meetings, I realize how valuable that time was for me. It was a time in which we gathered as a collaborative team to share ideas that were successful in teaching our students and also a time to express our 'goosebump moments' when our children (students) were finding out for themselves they could be successful. I looked forward to this time every week, without putting a time frame for it, because I knew it was just like gathering with old friends and talking about what has been going on throughout the week. Thank you, Professor Gudwin, for choosing me as one of the students to participate in this project.

LC Our weekly meetings were such a relief. We would meet and it was a chance for me to talk about what was going on with my students, to be able to talk about the ideas we had... maybe that strategy worked with you, so what am I doing wrong? Maybe I could try it that way. It was a real sharing time. We learned so much from each other. It was a way to get away from the classroom and talk about everything. We weren't embarrassed about what didn't work for us; none of us were ashamed when we messed up, because it was us, our group. It was a situation where we could admit our ups and downs. We were very comfortable together. It was a chance to let it out and not feel hindered by it. No one was going to ridicule you there; we were all there to help. That was the neatest thing. We learned so much.

D.R. took it a step further. After graduation, she moved back to her home in Trinidad, and began teaching in a school there. She reported via email recently that she loves her job and practically lives in her classroom, often leaving as late as 7:00 PM. She said that the janitor teases her that they should switch jobs because she's there so late anyway. "I have volunteered to come into school fifteen minutes early to work with students who are struggling with reading. Retelling is my main goal and it has worked extremely well. I have even shared it with the other eight teachers who are involved in the program... My nickname is 'Ms. Retell!' "

Stallworth (1998) discusses numerous studies that have indicated reform in teacher education, which must include close collaboration between universities and the preservice teachers and their schools, authentic staff development, encouragement of reflection, and

revised approaches; which will then focus these methods in assisting to facilitate growth in preservice teachers, enabling meaning and professional contributions to occur. According to "What to Expect Your First Year of Teaching," (DePaul, 1998) teachers who obtained the consideration and support of veteran teachers found that experience to be invaluable. This qualitative case study provided meaning and understanding, giving the reader a sense of what was actually experienced, in which the voices of the preservice teachers are heard. Quantitative data was also included with the retelling scores of the six classes. The statistics of retelling scores quantify data so that comparisons can be significantly interpreted. A holistic scoring rubric was used by the subjects in scoring their students' retells. The rubric was used for more objective and consistent scoring; students were rated 1, 2, 3, or 4, in the areas of meaning (amount and accuracy in information included in the retelling); structure (organization and focus, as well as the development and sequence); and language (sentence structure, word choice, and mechanics); with an emphasis on the communication of meaning and construction of structure. Subjects expressed appreciation of having the rubric to rely on for scoring, both as a guide and as a means of consistency.

Table 3: Focus Group Interview Sessions

Session	Agenda – Discussion	Data Collection To Do	Type of Retelling To Do
One	Opening Interview, Set up Schedule.	None	None
Two	Checklist/Inventory, Retelling – What is it?	Reflective Teaching Checklist, Pre-Inventory Survey	None

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Session	Agenda – Discussion	Data Collection To Do	Type of Retelling To Do
Three	Retelling – What is it?	First Written Retell	1st Oral/Written Baseline: First Written Retell photocopied for documentation
Four	First Retelling Experience	Rubric of Retelling	Continue with 1st Oral/Written
Five	Retelling Experiences; Teacher Self-Assessment Checklist	Collection of scores	2nd Written
Six	Retelling Experiences; Buddy Share, Borrowed Bits, Muddled Meanings, And Powerful Paraphrasing	Collection of Scores	3rd Oral
Seven	Retelling Experiences; What Makes an Effective Reading Teacher?	Collection of Scores	4th Written
Eight	Retelling Experiences; Retelling with Story Frames and Story Mapping	Collection of Scores	5th Written
Nine	Retelling Experiences; Oral Retellings	Collection of Scores	6th Oral
Ten	Retelling Experiences; Retellings for Assessment	Collection of Scores	7th Oral/Written Final Written Retell photocopied for documentation

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Session	Agenda – Discussion	Data Collection To Do	Type of Retelling To Do
Eleven	Retelling Experiences; Children's Ideas of Good Teachers, Eleven Expectations for New Teachers	Oral Discussion	None
Twelve	Surveys Celebrate Our Successes!	Post-Reflective Teaching Checklist, Post-Inventory Survey, Post-Inventory Written Survey, Teacher Self-Assessment Checklist	None

Table 3 illustrates the organization of the weekly focus group sessions, including session discussions, data collection, and types of retelling to be completed by the student teachers during each week. Following the focus groups, student teachers maintained their schedule and targeted various types of retelling strategies to be completed between focus group sessions.

Limitations of the Study:

Limitations included a small sampling, as well as an unusually positive attitude and continued enthusiasm of the subjects. Probable presence of bias was acknowledged, due to the subjects being previous students.

Retelling Experiences:

"Retelling holds promise as an instructional strategy for enhancing the comprehension of prose for both proficient and less-proficient readers. Evidently, the verbal reconstruction of text helps readers to organize and to deploy their processing

capacities more effectively" (Gambrell, Koskinen, and Kapinus, 1991, p. 362). "Retelling gives students the opportunity to integrate the information with their own background of experiences" (Dennis and Walter, 1995, p. 148). Working with students with learning disabilities and reading disabilities show that an "active engagement during reading is associated with better comprehension" (Wixson and Lipson, 1996, p. 552). Dr. Hazel Brown and Dr. Brian Cambourne (1990), and Dr. Leslie Mandel Morrow (1984, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1997, 1999) are the most well-known and well-respected names of the retelling strategy. Retelling involves speaking, listening, reading, writing, thinking, interacting, comparing, matching, selecting and organizing information, remembering, comprehending, illustrating, higher-order thinking, sharing, vocabulary, predictions, sequencing, recall, connection to prior knowledge – a natural form of language behavior.

First attempts at using the retelling strategy showed a variety of reflective perceptions:

First Retelling Experience:

> "My first written retell did not 'go' exactly as I would have liked it to go. I was rushed by my directing teacher... nevertheless, the [fourth grade] students thoroughly enjoyed the story, 'Teach Us, Amelia Bedelia' and tried their best. I believe that the next written retell will be smoother and more successful. I know this because of the excitement that the students expressed when I said to them that I will be reading a new story to them every week."
>
> "It was difficult to do a retell with the whole class because the students were practicing for the FCAT and reviewing intensively. Therefore there was limited time."
>
> "I had planned to do the written retell on Thursday with 6th period Reading. However, that morning my directing teacher informed me that during 6th period I would have another teacher's class in my class because she was going to a

workshop. That means a double class. By the time they came in the room, they were already restless and some were rude. I believe that under different conditions they would have done better."

"With my 9th graders, I only had an hour to do the activity. I realized this wasn't enough time. When I did the activity with the 10th graders, I had the entire [two hour] block. I was able to explain retelling more and I was able to reflect more on it. I believe that with time, the students will become better and better at not only retelling, but they will read better, write better, and even speak better. For my next retell activity, I plan to change a little of the format. I think the students felt that if I read the story first, it was pointless to listen the second time around. I'm going to try to have them read the story first and then I will read the story to them for better clarification."

"The [second grade] students were not used to any retelling activity! I had them participate orally first and then written. I noticed that they were all fearful of making writing and spelling mistakes. I reassured them that they were not going to be penalized for errors in grammar or spelling. I emphasized that I wanted them to retell as much of the story as possible. They chose the color paper and illustrated on the bottom or back of the paper. Today we paired up and read the retell to our partners. They worked well and they did indeed find something that their buddies had written that they would have liked to add in their retells. I also asked them how they felt about this assignment. One student, Javier, said, 'I felt like I was the author.' Another student said, 'I enjoyed making the drawing the best.' "

"I did the retell activity with my higher language arts group. It's a group of eight students ranging from 4th to 5th grades. They really enjoyed the activity because it was something different and they got to put themselves into it. The story we used was 'Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing' by Judy Blume. As a whole, they had fun with the story because it was something they could relate to. Overall, I was very impressed with their work and the activity helped them to break down the story and truly enjoy it. I plan to continue doing retells with them every week and make each activity different and motivating."

During the twelve-week study, a glimpse of the written reflections completed during the student teaching experience throughout the semester, shares the planning, reflections, motivations, frustrations, and excitement of the student teachers. The bonus of these written reflections was the quality of reflective teaching that was occurring, which is

a critical component of effective teaching. Rich descriptive data is included from the focus group sessions and written surveys/reflections.

Written Reflections – During the Study:

"After predicting and thinking of words that might be in the article, I could tell their excitement to read the article was building. They loved making predictions on post-it notes."

"This time, their written retells were much better than the last ones, as far as important details go."

"I realized later that some of the pairing up I had done was a little weak. I should have thought out who would have been a good match for pair-share beforehand."

"This one was worse than the others. I read Amelia Bedelia with them and they completely bombed the retells. I don't get it. I really thought that this retell was going to be awesome. They gave me very little details and not enough information about the story... What am I doing wrong?"

"I'm bothered by the fact that a very bright student is not writing to his potential. He always gives the correct information when orally asked, but he can never seem to write it all down. Do you think I should do oral retells first?"

"The kids are really enjoying the retell activity. What the kids have experienced and what I have experienced has been very beneficial. The students don't see the activity as 'work,' they see it as fun. Maria used quotes without quotations marks, and was very detailed. I was very proud of her. On the other hand, Joel comprehends the stories because when I ask questions, he is always able to answer them with details, but his written retells are very short."

"One of the students said, 'I would do a retell before that reading workbook any day!' I found that very interesting because I rarely use the reading workbook."

"I just feel Jonathan and Joel probably could have received a higher score if they had some extra time."

"Freddy is still having a hard time writing on his own. He is only used to copying from the board, so he is too scared to do it on his own. I'm monitoring his progress as a personal goal of mine, which I hope to have accomplished at the end of the retelling experience. I hope to extinguish his fear of writing on his own."

"The linguistic spillover you mentioned is noticeable. Many are using the author's words in their retells. For example in one, the author mentions 'going to look for bait.' I explained what it meant, and the author also clarifies it by listing the different foods he used for bait. Most of them used 'bait' instead of just saying 'food.' "

"You mentioned to me that perhaps putting up a word box would help. So I decided to do just that. On this retell, I reread the story aloud and put up words that they mentioned from the story in a word box on the board. I must say I saw an increase in the amount of details the retells contained. Almost all the students exhibited the 'linguistic spillover' in their writing.... Freddy exhibited a great improvement and wrote more than he has ever done before. He felt more comfortable with the word box."

"At first, I heard one or two students say, 'We are doing this again?' I was a little discouraged at first. But then I explained to them that this is the process of 'Retelling.' I also used a different strategy this time."

"Michael usually never writes a lot and for this retell, he wrote the most."

"As we were reading, Paulo said, 'You won't believe me, but all of the words I put for the prediction are in here.' I thought that was pretty neat. He got very excited."

"Michael (the one who doesn't like to write) – he wrote three cards full! I was so excited."

"When the students shared, I noticed that most were really on target. I haven't scored them yet, but I feel their scores have improved. They really, really liked this story. I'm so glad!"

"In this retell, the students enjoyed the story and got into it. I saw much better writing and language than I have seen in other retells. I'm really proud of them."

"I was excited because I knew that the students would participate and get involved because of the rhyming and the repetition. Their reactions confirmed my suspicions and they thoroughly enjoyed the poem."

"The share and compare step went smoothly, to my surprise. The students actually participated and discussed what each of them predicted. The laughs and the positive reactions to this part really impressed me."

"Unfortunately, I got reactions like, 'All the details? But I can't remember all.' 'I don't know how to start!' ' Where do I begin?' ' This is hard!' I sensed frustration! I am considering breaking up the steps into different days."

"Not only do I feel more confident about this retelling thing, but the students are feeling a lot more comfortable with the steps. Yeah! This time, the students even wrote more and they enjoyed the story. I believe that this has a lot to do with the fact that it was only twelve pages long."

"What was amazing, was that the students actually used quotes from the story!"

"I have seen such a change in my students' ability to stay on task..."

"Since my class is an inclusive setting, it has thirty-five students total... It is difficult for my class to complete big projects such as retelling in a creative way in a short amount of time."

"I did what was advised. I read the students' last retells to the entire class – what an experience, they were all beaming with pride. I ensured to make at least two positive comments about retelling components (e.g. using quotes or sequencing or recalling details) and this week I noticed that the students' attitudes toward retelling have changed. They are no longer questioning the process, and I am not hearing, 'How do I start?' They are now anxious to write and as a matter of fact, they show off how much they have written! They also are very excited to read their retells, which I will have them do."

"The students did better in understanding what to do, but the retells were not that good. I don't blame anything on the students though. I believe it is more my error than anyone else's. The story we were reading was not a good choice for a retell at this level. The story was from the basal reader and there were too many facts and details to remember and I believe that was the downfall."

"To hear the kids speak about it [oral retellings]... to hear them and their expressions, 'and the lion will swallow me...' it's incredible. Because the oral language is without mistakes, you can't see the spelling errors and the handwriting. The big point is they get to say it without me concentrating on the mechanics. They were so into it."

"Most importantly, I have noticed that they tried their best to use all of the components (sequencing, quotes, etc.) that I spoke about in their retelling this week. I am ecstatic! This is a perfect example of growth!"

"He finally took that step to write on his own."

"P.S. I was asked [by my directing teacher], 'Aren't you sick of retellings already?' To which I responded: 'Not at all! Because I see the improvement each time!' "

"Because the students really enjoyed the story, 'How Little Frog Tricked the Lion' I decided not to move on to something new, but to continue with the short folktale. The students really took this one and 'ran with it' so to speak. I was about to throw out the extra copies of the stories by the time we were finished and to my surprise, as they were on their way out the door, they asked me if they could have a copy of the story. Amazing!"

"As usual, what thrilled me the most was the fact that they mentioned a lot of quotes. I used a rubric to assist me as I listened to their oral retells. This was extremely helpful. I thoroughly enjoyed this experience, not so much because I know and see the excitement in their eyes as they retell (which is obvious testimony) their stories, but because I see the improvement everytime we do a retell activity. One thing I learned this week – you can be flexible with retelling. Thank goodness!"

"They really got into their retells! I saw much better writing and language than I have seen in other retells. I'm really proud of them. I believe my students really have improved a lot."

The findings support that the six student teachers successfully engaged in retelling activities, finding it a positive and productive strategy in teaching reading to second to tenth grade students with learning disabilities, in increasing reading skills, writing proficiency, vocabulary experiences, and oral language, as well as encouraging risk-taking and positive social interactions. There was evidence of this in the written reflections of the six subjects and the weekly oral focus group sessions. It was also unmistakable that the sharing of student teaching experiences and perceptions in weekly sessions coupled with an observation and debriefing, enabled the preservice teachers to experience a positive growth of confidence and competency. Reflection and oral discussions are important features of student teaching. At the end of the semester, quantitative data of the retelling

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scores showed two classes remained the same, two classes made slight improvement, and two classes made significant gains, in comparing beginning retellings to the later retellings. Table 4 shares the data of retelling scores.

Table 4: Retelling Scores

Grade:	n	Reported Reading Grade Level M	Initial Retelling Score M 1 to 4	Median Retelling Score M 1 to 4	Final Retelling Score M 1 to 4
Inclusion LD 4th grade	11	N/R	2	2	2
Resource LD/VE 6th/7th/8th Grade	14	3.0	2	1.5	2.5
Resource LD/VE 4th/5th Grade	7	3.2	1	2	2
Resource LD/VE 2nd Grade	10	1.6	2	2	2.5
Resource LD/VE 9th/10th Grade	15	4.5	2	2	2
Resource LD/VE 3rd Grade	11	2.0	2	2	3

Note: N/R: Not Reported

Table 4 reveals the grade level of the students, as well as the initial, medial, and final retelling score. The scores of two groups remained the same, two increased slightly, and two made significant gains. Note: The scoring of students' retells can be subjective, although a rubric was used in scoring, to lessen the degree of subjectivity. The retelling scores are not grade levels, but are scores from 1 to 4, based on a holistic scoring rubric.

A sample of a student's response: "I felt like I was the author" by a struggling reader made the process even more meaningful to both subjects and researcher. Table 5 gives insight to a sampling of the students' self-evaluation of the retelling strategy.

Table 5: A Sampling of Students' Self-Evaluation of Retelling

Student	Grade	When I think about retells, I know I am good at:	My goal as a Storyteller is:
Freddy	2nd Grade	writing.	I would like to write about stories.
Jonathan	2nd Grade	writing.	I like to write my own story.
Amanda	2nd Grade	painting.	I would like to be the author.
Ian	3rd Grade	the art of retelling the story.	read more books.
Martin	3rd Grade	remembering.	I'll read the story more than two times.
Leamsi	3rd Grade	art and retelling the story.	make kids like it more.
Richard	3rd Grade	listening to the story.	I will be fast and be funny and like it.
Justin	3rd Grade	thinking.	being good at telling stories.
Paulo	9th Grade	predicting what the story may be about and sometimes naming the words that are going to come out. [predicting vocabulary]	to make the listeners more full of fantasy, to lose their pressure, to fascinate them, with what I am reading to them.

Student	Grade	When I think about retells, I know I am good at:	My goal as a Storyteller is:
Victor	9th Grade	making a picture in the other person's head.	to make myself picture the story as well as to make the other to whom I am talking to picture it.
Solomon	9th Grade	talking the story over to someone who never read the book and make that person want to read the book.	to make people feel what I've written, like make them smile, cry, happy. That's my goal as a storyteller.
Michael	9th Grade	when I read a retell, I am a writer.	to write more and more as I get better and better at reading.

Table 5 illustrates a sampling of students' self-evaluation and feelings of the retelling process. "Out of the mouths of babes..." shows what a small sampling of the students experienced during the retelling lessons, when responding to two specific sentence starters, "When I think about retells, I know I am good at..." and "My goal as a storyteller is..." All of these self-evaluations were completed in writing, with adaptations including the preservice teacher reading the sentence starter to the students if necessary.

Final reflections completed by the subjects give a rich view of the total experience of using the retelling strategy while completing a semester of student teaching with students diagnosed with learning disabilities. It is apparent to this researcher that the need of working with preservice teachers is critical.

Final Reflections:

"During my internship, I learned so much because of our retell project. I not only learned strategies that I will use now in my classroom, but the support I received throughout my internship is what made my internship so special. My students benefited so much from the retell activities. Students who NEVER wrote more than three sentences were writing two- and three-page retells. I believe my students enjoyed the change of activity as well. They were so used to reading the passage and answering questions. I introduced them to what a prediction is, to what a retell should be. My students learned to share their ideas as well. I learned a lot too. I really understand how beneficial retelling can be. It is a great assessment tool as well as a great activity during our reading block. The kids enjoyed it and I did too. I learned so many fun and exciting activities that I can do with my students. I feel so grateful to have been a part of such a fantastic experience. I had a wonderful experience working with you. Thank you for everything – the support, the love, the comfort. You made our internship so much more memorable."

"I have noticed a drastic change in Steven's ability to stay on task... He has been struggling through these retells. I did my best to encourage him and take some extra time with the students who needed my attention. Jonathan has demonstrated a tremendous improvement in both oral and written retells. He has enjoyed and put in the extra effort to complete the retells. Brian has done great since the beginning. He understands the meaning of the reading materials, but just has some deficits in the language portion. He sequences and retells in detail. Ricardo has been great! He began being a 'behavior problem' but this activity just completely transformed him and he participated fully in our retells. There are still deficits in the written language, but I was able to follow the sequence of events and he understood the stories. Yosmer has tried hard to work as his peers, but it has been very rough for him. He hardly ever finished any work assignment his teacher gave him and when I started working with him I gave him extra time. However, he is easily distracted and needed me to keep a close watch over him so he wouldn't get off task. He experiences difficulty in writing and was so used to copying that he was scared to try, just like Freddy. I wanted to get Freddy to try to write without copying, so I gave him verbal praise and constant reinforcement. Finally, he started doing it. He finally took that step to write on his own. I am sure that if Freddy had a chance of working on retells from the beginning of the year, there would be an enormous amount of improvement...."

"I must begin by saying that I was honored to be a part of this experience. The entire project has been extremely beneficial to me as a student and a teacher. I am disappointed that I could not do all the wonderful retells I had planned to do, but we all know that teachers must be flexible, especially when it isn't our own classroom. I think retelling is a great concept. It gives the teacher knowledge of the students' comprehension and writing skills and it is a fun assessment to

implement. I will definitely do retells with my students in my classroom. (That sounds great – 'my!') My only regret is not having the time to do the retells I had imagined I would. The 'support' groups were wonderful escapes for me. My mind was always on what was happening there and our conversations and venting sessions afterward were awesome. I can't tell you how great it has been being able to just sit and talk about our experiences and share ideas. Overall, retelling is excellent and I will continue to use it in my classroom on a weekly basis."

"Overall, this experience has been even more than I ever anticipated. Yes, I expected that I would be going through the retelling process once a week, and yes I assumed that I would acquire a wealth of knowledge and experience by doing so. However, what I did not expect was the constant support that I got not only by my colleagues, but also by my Professor Gudwin. The response by the students was astounding! The students who I was told would never be able to write on their own and who would not even know where to begin, were writing more than ever anticipated by the end of the third week. The students themselves noticed their progress and even boasted about their efforts and accomplishment. As one student announced one day as I was complimenting every student for a job well done on their written retells: 'Miss R., our class can write a whole book if we wanted to.' To which I replied, 'Most definitely!' Why not? I wished that I had been there longer for them to have the experience of actually doing so. Nevertheless, I hope to be reading a book written by one of them by the time I retire. ☺. Retelling on the whole is something that I would most definitely carry over into my classroom on a weekly basis or at least with most of the books that I read to my class. Why, you may ask? Simply because I have seen the growth, not only in the scores, but in the self-esteem of the students, especially when it comes to reading. It was obvious when I walked into that classroom that the students I worked with were not exposed to a variety of reading, therefore, they shied away from reading aloud. This, to me, is unacceptable. Unfortunately, some VE teachers make excuses for the students with learning disabilities and allow them to struggle along without actually doing something about it. It should be the reverse, because a child is LD, he/she should get even more attention and be more exposed to reading than the 'regular ed.' student. This case study has taught more than an entire three-credit course would have done in a university. For this, I thank you, Professor Gudwin. PS. This is not for a grade. ☺ It is coming from the heart."

Post Inventory Surveys were distributed to the student teachers at the end of the study, investigating effective teacher attributes, a strength in teaching, and a rationale of using the retelling strategy.

Table 6: Post-Inventory Written Survey – Influential Teacher Attributes and Retelling

A sampling of examples of influential teacher attributes that represent their greatest strength in teaching:	A sampling of examples of instructional areas that represent a strength in teaching:	A sampling of examples of reasons to utilize oral and/or written retelling strategy:
"I can be flexible and find the positive in what others might view as negative."	"Finding students' strengths and using them to benefit them educationally."	"Since there are so many ways to use retelling strategies, the students will maintain an enthusiastic outlook when doing retells."
"I try to design lessons that will motivate and keep learners actively involved."	"Explaining instructional procedures in a detailed manner."	"The students will be familiar with the basics of retelling but the activities can be different."
"I'm enthusiastic when I teach."	"I read to and with my students every chance I get."	"Retelling gives a more accurate measure of students' comprehension."
"I have a positive attitude towards teaching."	"Every moment is a teaching moment."	"Students have the opportunity to compare and contrast the different views with their peers."
"I try to understand and respect differences in students, teachers, and not judge or criticize others."	"I have strong organizational skills."	"Retelling increases writing skills as well as reading skills."
"I have high expectations for my students and for myself."	"Doing retells to increase reading comprehension and vocabulary."	"To encourage students to write with the same passion, style, and excitement as authors do."

Another Post Survey was given at the end of the study, with emphasis on the total retelling process, illustrating the subjects' reflections on each of the components of the retelling strategy.

1) Immersing students in the genre: "I introduced my students to several genres."

2) Using predictions: "We used all of these techniques during the entire internship."

3) Using Pair-Share, justifying the predictions: "Students enjoyed the pair-share, and liked sharing their predictions."
4) The teacher reading aloud the passages: "Students got a better understanding when I read."
5) Encouraging students to reread passage highlighting and repeated readings such as choral or echo reading: "We worked on the poem, 'Still I Rise' using all of these skills."
6) Retells in writing: "My students were more successful with short articles than with chapters from a chapter book."
7) Borrowed Bits, Muddled Meanings, Powerful Paraphrasing: "Students shared comments about what ideas they would like to borrow."
8) Students share retellings: "This made the students feel important; that their work was valued."
9) Application of new knowledge, proceeded with instructional purpose behind the literature selection: "We have spoken about retelling and the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and the importance or rationale behind the concept."

Conclusion:

It can be concluded from the findings that the six preservice teachers in this study engaged in retelling activities during their student teaching semester, finding it a positive and productive strategy in increasing reading skills, writing proficiency, vocabulary

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experiences, and oral language, encouraging risk-taking and positive social interactions, as well as increased self-esteem. The discoveries shared are an attempt to view the preservice experiences, specifically of teaching reading to students with learning disabilities, through the eyes of a preservice teacher – including successes, failures, frustrations, joys, anticipation, preparation, reflection, and satisfaction. It was unmistakable that the sharing of student teaching experiences in weekly sessions coupled, with an observation and debriefing, provided a "lifeline" and made an impact on the subjects. "Talking aloud about their thinking and decisions about teaching energizes teachers and causes them to refine their cognitive maps, and hence their instructional choices and behaviors" (Costa and Garmston, 1994, p. 86). The authors also share that this oral discussion about teachers' perceptions and teaching experiences often lead to a "sense of professional excitement and renewed joy and energy related to their work" (p. 86). This is one of the added bonuses of the communication process. Reflective thought can be a meaningful process, influencing the outcome of a teaching experience.

"... What I did not expect was the constant support that I got not only by my colleagues, but also my professor... This case study project has taught more than an entire three-credit course would have done at a university..."

We achieve what we expect to achieve;

we fail if we expect to fail;

we are more likely to engage with demonstrations

of those whom we regard as significant and who hold high expectations for us

(Frew, Jatan, Morris, 1990. p. 7).

We must hold high expectations

for both our preservice teachers and our students with learning disabilities.

Both can achieve if we expect them to achieve;

Both may fail if we expect them to fail,

And both are more likely to engage in demonstrations of those

(Their teachers)

Whom they regard as significant

And who hold high expectations for them.

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